

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-15 OMB-01 ACDA-10 SAM-01 IO-11 /098 W

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R 121248Z MAR 76

FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5016

INFO AMEMBASSY BLANTYRE

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM

AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

UNCLAS CAPE TOWN 0261

E.O.11652:N/A

TAGS: RH, PINS, MILI

SUBJ: RHODESIAN MILITARY SITUATION

1. DURING RECENT PRESS BRIEFINGS RHODESIAN CABINET
MINISTERS HAVE PROVIDED SOME INFORMATION ABOUT STATE
OF COUNTRY'S MILITARY PREPAREDNESS AND ABOUT GUERRILLA
THREAT.

2. ON MARCH 5 MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS
P.K. VAN DER BYL SAID THAT RHODESIA WAS INCREASING
SIZE OF ITS REGULAR ARMY TO MEET STEP-UP IN 'TERRORIST'
ACTIVITIES AND TO RELIEVE STRAIN ON RESERVE FORCES.
HE ESTIMATED THAT APPROXIMATELY 1,000 'TERRORISTS'
OPERATING WITHIN RHODESIA AND THAT ANOTHER 4,000-5,000
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ARE WAITING WITHIN TANZANIA AND MOZAMBIQUE. THE RATIO

OF BLACKS TO WHITES IN THE RHODESIAN ARMY IS 1.5
TO 1 AND IN THE POLICE FORCE 3 TO 1. BLACK OFFICERS WILL SOON
BE COMMISSIONED IN THE ARMY.

3. VAN DE BYL REPEATED HIS EARLIER STATEMENT THAT THERE
IS NO EVIDENCE OF SIGNIFICANT CUBAN OR RUSSIAN TROOPS OR
SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY PRESENT IN MOZAMBIQUE. HE NOTED
HIS BELIEF THAT FRELIMO WOULD NOT ATTACH RHODESIA, BUT
ASSERTED THAT RHODESIAN FORCES WOULD CONTINUE 'HOT PURSUIT'
OF GUERRILLAS INTO MOZAMBIKAN TERRITORY. HE SAID RHODESIAN
CONFLICT IS NOT 'A RACE WAR' THAT WHITES AND BLACKS
FIGHTING ON BOTH SIDES, AND THAT MAJOR IMPETUS OF CONFLICT
IS RUSSIAN IMPERIALISM.

4. DEPUTY MINISTER IN CHARGE OF SECURITY AFFAIRS IN THE

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER, TED SUTTON-PRYCE, REPEATED
MUCH OF VAN DER BYL'S REASONING AND INFORMATION IN PRESS
CONFERENCE ON MARCH 9 AND ADDED FOLLOWING INFORMATION.
ZAPU GUERRILLAS ARE ALSO OPERATING OUT OF MOZAMBIQUE IN ADDITION
TO ZANU FORCES. NO GUERRILLA FORCES ARE OPERATING FROM
ZAMBIAN TERRITORY. GUERRILLAS HAVE ESTABLISHED CONTINUOUS
PRESENCE IN NORTHEASTERN OPERATIONAL AREA, BUT THEIR
ACTIVITIES IN SOUTHWESTERN AREA ARE STILL HIT AND RUN
ATTACKS, WHICH ARE MOUNTED FROM CAMPS WITHIN MOZAMBIQUE,
AND USUALLY DIRECTED AGAINST NON-MILITARY TARGETS. HE
AMPLIFIED VAN DERBYL'S COMMENTS ON STRENGTHENING OF
RHODESIAN MILITARY BY NOTING THAT 60 PERCENT INCREASE OF
FIGHTING FORCE HAS ALREADY TAKEN EFFECT SINCE UPSWING IN
GUERRILLA ACTIVITY BEGAN EARLY THIS YEAR.

5. SUTTON-PRYCE ADDED THAT RHODESIAN FORCES COULD HANDLE
GUERRILLAS AND CUBANS SHOULD LATTER INTERVENE IN NUMBERS
SIMILAR TO THEIR ANGOLAN INVOLVEMENT. HOWEVER, HE NOTED,
THAT IF RUSSIANS BECAME SIGNIFICANTLY INVOLVED THE
CONFLICT WOULD BECOME A BROADER ONE AS WESTERN POWERS (AND
PRESUMABLY SOUTH AFRICA) WOULD BE FORCED TO REAPPRAISE
THEIR POSITIONS.

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